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Publication date:
2011

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (APA):
Frølund, L., & Flåten, B-T. (2011). Leveraging the Affordances of the Emerging 3d Internet for Entrepreneurial "Next Practices": Selected Case Studies from The Nordic Creative Industries . Abstract from BCERC 2011, Syracuse, NY, United States. <http://www.bcerc.com>

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LEVERAGING THE AFFORDANCES OF THE EMERGING 3D INTERNET FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL “NEXT PRACTICES”: SELECTED CASE STUDIES FROM THE NORDIC CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

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Summary

Recent technological advances have led to the rapid development of computer-generated spaces that enable individual users to in a sense “step into the Internet” and many offer 3D (three dimensional) graphics. Users can immerse themselves in various ways; communicate, collaborate, create, and even organize economic activity. The 3D Internet is currently known mainly for entertainment or training purposes, including virtual worlds, conferences, simulations, role-playing games. While 3D Internet-enabled technologies are advancing rapidly, this growth has been accompanied by hype about opportunities for entrepreneurship.

Unfortunately, the literature offers sparse knowledge at the industry level. There is a lack of overview regarding 3D Internet entrepreneurship practices and the real challenges faced by entrepreneurs. In this study, we explore the potential as well as the hindrances to new venture creation related to the 3D Internet. Our theoretical basis is affordances, or the material and social properties of any technology in relation to affording actions by humans.

Our first research question focuses on the perception of affordances by entrepreneurs: what does the 3D Internet offer or afford as a “space” for entrepreneurial practices? Our second research question focuses on understanding how entrepreneurs utilize their social networks. Our approach to entrepreneurship is social-- concerned with the dynamics of social interactions and networked information ecology.

Methods

We are currently conducting 10 case studies of entrepreneurs within the creative industries, health services and business-to-business communication. These entrepreneurs are located in or stem from the Nordic countries (Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland). The collection methods are in-depth interviews and secondary data.

Results/Implications

Our preliminary results indicate that 3D Internet entrepreneurs are “pioneers” who are designing the affordances and utility of the future Internet. They are characterized by the active knowledge sharing in entrepreneurial networks, and organization of complex collaborations. This enables greater risk-taking and higher performance. Cultural relatedness appears significant for the Nordic countries, and networking efforts bring together an already inter-related niche. Getting funding from European and Nordic sources is challenging, but prevents fragmentation. We suggest that academics can play a role in developing and stabilizing such entrepreneurial networks.

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